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Covert operations are American way: Stockwell

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Through the CIA's activities, the U.S. is supporting ~~violence~~, drug trafficking, political assassinations and civil wars, charged John Stockwell, a former CIA official who spoke at Highland Park High School Sunday.

"We're talking about gross millions sacrificed by national security compulsions.

"And we do it against countries too weak to fight against our brutalities," Stockwell said.

ALTHOUGH STOCKWELL'S appearance Sunday was designed to raise funds for the Robert Cleland for Congress Committee, the target of his speech was the covert operations of the CIA.

Through the CIA's covert activities, the government persuades foreign governments, organizations or persons to support U.S. foreign policy, Stockwell said. Covert action is also used to dominate and control markets in other countries, he added.

And although the Reagan Administration's covert military operations in Nicaragua came under attack, covert operations to achieve foreign policy ends are not new to this country, Stockwell said.

The federal government's economic policy often has hidden, or covert, effects on the operations of Third World countries. Such policies can make or break a country's economic system, and can as surely as military action result in death, he charged.

ALL SUCH ACTIONS are done in the name of stemming the flow of communism, he said. "If paranoia works to make our economy stronger, why should we change it? If people have to die for houses, cars and safety and if it works for our profit and safety, why change it?" he asked the audience.

The government is not pressured by Americans to change its policies because the public is convinced that countries on which covert pressure is exerted are threatened with communism.

And such policies are most often directed against weak adversaries — not in Germany, France or Sweden where the Communist Party also has a following.

Although policy can result in death and destruction, the Reagan Administration looks the other way, Stockwell charged.

This summer, Congress, pushed by President Ronald Reagan, approved \$100 million to fund such "terrorism" in

Nicaragua, Stockwell said. It's a huge investment to overthrow a foreign government, he added.

STOCKWELL, WHO WROTE the 1978 book, "In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story" told the audience the government has used the media to convince Americans that the threat of communism has justified the investment of 61 cents out of every tax dollar on the military.

Yet the U.S. already has enough explosives to ruin 80 Soviet Unions and make 20 planets uninhabitable, Stockwell said.

In 200 years as a nation, the U.S. has fought in 50 major wars with about 10 years between wars. "Now we're being taught to hate Nicaragua," he said. The U.S. is gearing up for war with Central America, Stockwell charged.

"We're conditioning our children for war at age 2 by sitting them down in front of a one-eyed babysitter to watch such movies as 'Rambo,' " he said.

Well known athletes and entertainers are telling young people to sign up with the military, but the truth not represented in advertising is that many of these youths are looking at a future where their "legs are blown off at the knees and their intestines are wrapped around their necks," Stockwell said.

"WE'RE A MINDLESS people," charged Stockwell. "What rational person would send his son off to be slaughtered and killed?"

Although Stockwell said the American predisposition to covert action may never change, there is some reason to be hopeful. Slavery has been abolished, and civil rights as well as women's rights are progressing as a result of individuals' commitment.

He suggested that those upset at the use of covert action get involved, write their congressmen, hit the streets in protest.

Then "if there's a bomb dropped in your town, you'll have a moment to hug your loved ones and say, 'at least we tried,' " Stockwell said.

Stockwell was employed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from 1964 to 1977. During that time he held various posts from case officer to chief of Lubumbashi, Zaire.

He is the highest ranked official to leave the CIA and go public with his criticism. He received the CIA's Medal of Merit and is now its most outspoken critic.